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Give us a flesh and blood person for a change

At a time when government reformers are trying to take the politicians out of just about everything, it is interesting that President Ford has succeeded in putting a politician in charge of the CIA.

Before confirming Bush, the Senate explored at length the dangers of injecting politics into the most sensitive agency of the government, as it should have. The appointment surely holds an element of risk.

But maybe it's time to take our chances with a politician for a change. At least Bush, former congressman and one-time chairman of the Republican National Com-

mittee, is a flesh and blood person. And as an old vote-seeker, he may even have a feeling for what this country is all about and how the people would like it run.

A politician — almost any politician — is the antithesis of those steely-eyed, trench-coated technicians who have been giving the agency — and this country — such a bad name around the world. Maybe the FBI would benefit from a similar change in leadership.

Everyone knows that things run more efficiently if you get the politics out of them, but just because everyone knows it doesn't make it so. We got the politics out of the

Post Office Department five years ago and today we are paying higher postage for less service. One reason the Postal Service is running \$920 million in the red is because the efficient non-political Postal Rate Commission took seven months to make one decision.

While attending a recent program at the State Department, I was approached by a young foreign service officer, more courageous than diplomatic, who declared: "I hope you newspaper people are happy now that you've got the politicians out of the State Department. You laughed at Soapy

Williams as assistant secretary of state, but Williams and politicians like him could speak their minds because they had constituencies of their own. You've left us with a pack of career professionals at high levels who don't dare question a word Henry says." I thought he had a point.

This is something to think about locally, as well, when we weigh the increasing number of plans to get this or that function of local government out of politics.

We didn't get any miracles from the non-elected Dade County Transit Authority and we aren't getting any from the non-elected Downtown Development Authority or the non-elected Water and Sewer Authority.

No one is suggesting a return to the days when the head of every federal and local agency was a patronage appointee. Nor would I want Bush and people like him to run the CIA and FBI the way Mayor Daley runs the Chicago Police Department.

But in our search for efficiency and professionalism, we ought to go overboard. In a democratic politics is the means by which people influence the direction of the government. And politicians, however obtuse they may appear, are sometimes better turned to what the public wants than skilled, professional bureaucrats.

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